

**Minutes of the Special Meeting/Retreat
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
Thursday, November 21, 2019, 9:05 a.m.–3:20 p.m.
Babson Executive Conference Center, Potomac Room
1 Snyder Drive, Babson Park, MA 02457**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

Katherine Craven, Chair, Brookline
James Morton, Vice Chair, Boston
Amanda Fernandez, Belmont
Matthew Hills, Newton
James Peyser, Secretary of Education, Milton
Paymon Rouhanifard, Brookline
Mary Ann Stewart, Lexington
Matthew Tibbitts, Student Advisory Council, Ludlow
Martin West, Newton

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

Ed Doherty, Boston
Michael Moriarty, Holyoke

Chair Craven convened the special meeting/retreat of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) at 9:05 a.m.

Introduction and Retreat Objectives

Chair Craven welcomed Board members to the retreat. She said the objectives for the day are to build a shared understanding of the following: members' roles, interests, and expertise; *Our Way Forward*; and some key issues affecting K-12 public education in Massachusetts.

Opening Activity

Elizabeth Najjar, professional facilitator, facilitated the retreat agenda, conversations, and activities. In the opening activity, Board members reflected on what motivates each of them to serve on the Board.

Board Engagement

General Counsel Rhoda Schneider briefly reviewed the Board's responsibilities under state law, including the education clause of the Massachusetts Constitution, and outlined the Board's powers and duties relating to standards, resources, assessment, and accountability. Members engaged in discussion.

Our Way Forward

Commissioner Riley reviewed his key initiatives as outlined in *Our Way Forward*. He led Board members through painting and poetry exercises, as examples of instructional practices that can promote deeper learning.

Secretary Peyser – Reflections

Secretary Peyser presented data on the workforce shortage and skills gap and highlighted several state initiatives, including Early College and Innovation Pathways and an expanded and integrated system of career-technical education. Noting that overall NAEP scores have been flat for several years, he stressed the importance of effective reading instruction and the findings of the National Reading Panel that systematic phonics instruction works. He offered a model for a K-12 education system in which the state sets the conditions, the district delivers capacity, and the school is the locus of coherence and change.

Updates on Current Initiatives

Department staff provided brief updates on several program initiatives. Senior Associate Commissioner Heather Peske updated the Board on early literacy and the Department's literacy strategic plan. Senior Associate Commissioner Cliff Chuang addressed family engagement policies and Senior Associate Commissioner Komal Bhasin shared practices that she has used in schools to promote family engagement. Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston reviewed current special education performance data and the IEP Improvement Project to strengthen planning and instruction for students with disabilities. Senior Associate Commissioner Ventura Rodriguez updated the Board on the Department's work to increase educator diversity and promote culturally responsive and sustaining practices in our schools and districts.

Lunch

Board members took a break for lunch from 12:45–1:30 p.m.

What Are We Passionate About?

Elizabeth Najjar led Board members through a continued discussion of what motivates them to care about K-12 education and why they have volunteered to serve on the Board.

Small-Group Discussions

Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson provided a brief overview of Massachusetts law that establishes the competency determination. In small-group discussions, members identified some issues on which they would like more information as the Board prepares to address competency determination issues over the next year.

Next Steps: Collective and Individual

Elizabeth Najjar led the members through an exercise to identify their key takeaways from the retreat, next steps based on the discussions, and their reflections on their individual commitment as Board members.

Closing

Chair Craven thanked the members for their attendance and active participation throughout the day, and thanked Elizabeth Najjar and Department staff for organizing and facilitating the retreat. Members thanked Chair Craven and Babson College for hosting the retreat.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 3:20 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education
and Secretary to the Board